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## The Trend in Finance

### Uneasiness Over First-of-the-Year Business Adjustments Leads to Declines in Speculative Prices

**I**N THIS period of inventory taking, speculators, seeking to assess the future values, were anything but calm and self-contained during the first week of 1922. Those who expressed their views by the purchase and sale of securities and of future contracts in the commodity markets revealed a mildly explosive mood, occasionally stunted by moments of indecision.

The trend of quotations, like the state of mind of speculators, was irregular and episodic. The spectacular smash of Tuesday was followed by Wednesday's recovery, which was offset by a further decline on Thursday.

Toward the close of the week the tendency of prices was uncertain, though slightly firmer on covering, with slight net losses for the week, especially among industrial shares.

Speculators in foreign exchange, apparently disengaged by the "trimming" that they took in the sharp advance a fortnight or so ago, have been less in evidence in the market lately than heretofore. The result is that the market has been enabled to pursue a course of comparative calm, free from the wide fluctuations so injurious to development of trade relations, and has exhibited a measure of steadiness that in these days is unusual. Legitimate commercial transactions continue on a relatively small scale, so that there has been no great activity and the market has been narrow. This condition naturally lends itself to the purpose of operators who may desire to profit by a rise or decline, the purchase or sale of even a fair amount of exchange being calculated to have a disproportionate effect.

Banking opinion respecting the outlook for money, though in agreement as to the broad trend, varies so far as the continuance of conditions prevailing during the greater part of last week and particularly at the close is concerned. Ease, first observed in the call loan rate, spread to time money, the rate on mixed collateral loans going down to 4% per cent on a fair volume of transactions, and extended to the commercial paper and acceptance markets, where its influence was apparent in the tendencies but not recorded in rates. Bankers do not look for firmness in money, at least while the speculative demand remains of slim proportions, but there is some question how long a rate of 3% per cent on call funds can hold without resulting in a diversion of money into other channels. One point in favor of the low rate is that Western funds have played a less important part in the market recently than for some time past. The usual process of Western banks withdrawing money which they can use to better advantage at home does not, therefore, figure so largely in the prospect.

The most sinister financial development last week was the recurrence of a flood of rumors. For many months the street had been free of general onslaught from untrustworthy gossips.

After inventory taking and the passing of the day of settlement, business mortalities frequently rise. A gain in the number of failures normally marks the last phase of an adverse business cycle. In the last twelve months fundamental credit conditions have so greatly improved that the time is approaching when bankers will feel it safe to permit certain of the weak links of industry, which have been kept nominally solvent during the delicate period of deflation by means of a pulmotor, to seek solace and correction by the old-fashioned process of bankruptcy. When such a development comes, those lacking in astuteness may miss its real significance.

### The Week in Retrospect

**TUESDAY**—Crude oil prices reduced in East Pennsylvania 50 cents to \$3.50 a barrel. Kelly Springfield passes dividend on common stock.

**WEDNESDAY**—General Motors Corporation omits common dividend.

**THURSDAY**—Earnings of Federal Reserve Bank here announced for 1921 at \$26,095,832, a reduction of about 50 per cent from 1920.

**FRIDAY**—Call issued for economic conference in Genoa in March. Representatives from the United States, Germany and Russia invited.

### Summary of Stock Exchange Dealings

#### STOCKS

Last week, before, January 1 to date.

Railroad stocks 506,300 378,800 \$538,700 456,500 639,800 764,900

Other stocks 2,914,300 3,020,300 3,472,600 2,899,300 2,306,700 4,658,300

All stocks 3,420,600 3,399,100 3,855,600 5,423,200

LAST WEEK, WEEK BEFORE, YEAR AGO, 1922, 1921, 1920.

U.S. government bonds \$40,589,000 \$41,100,000 \$43,000,000 \$37,363,000 \$48,801,000

Other bonds 17,962,000 14,531,000 2,001,000 18,102,000 21,216,000

Railroad bonds 22,046,000 17,586,000 15,001,000 18,776,000 15,337,000

All bonds 80,387,000 75,222,000 70,619,000 74,241,000 88,364,000

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